



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

DATE: October 6, 2005

TO: Special Education Stakeholders

FROM: Elizabeth Burmaster *E. Burmaster*
State Superintendent

RE: State Special Education Law

First, I want to thank each of you for committing your time and energy to address a number of new provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004. We at the department remain committed to the stakeholder process and believe it is working. As you know, the stakeholder group serves multiple purposes, including advising the department about state law, the State Performance Plan, the new IDEA waivers and the Continuous Improvement Focused Monitoring System. The group has been very successful in establishing focus areas for monitoring and has been equally successful in working to establish six-year goals for the twenty indicators for the State Performance Plan. The group also has had some very positive preliminary discussions about the waivers.

As you know, we were informed on September 12, 2005 that some school organizations are preparing to have a bill introduced in the near future that would conform state law with IDEA 2004. Not all stakeholders felt they could come to the table with the authority to negotiate a consensus position around how to approach state law. That caused us to cancel the meeting scheduled for September.

Based on suggestions we have received, I have determined that we will call together a smaller group of stakeholders who will work with a mediator to prepare a report to the larger group and the department about potential changes in state special education law.

I have invited the following individuals to participate in the small group process:

John Ashley, Executive Director, Wisconsin Association of School Boards (or designee)
Nissan Bar-Lev, President, Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services
Joanne Huston, Legal Counsel, Wisconsin Education Association Council
Jan Serak, Co-Director, Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support
Mary Skadahl, Statewide Coordinator, Wisconsin Statewide Parent/Educator Initiative
Jeff Spitzer-Resnick, Managing Attorney, Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy
Patricia Yahle, Director of Special Education, Milwaukee Public Schools

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I am requesting that this group develop a set of recommendations within thirty days following their first meeting. As we have stated repeatedly during this process, the department wants to support legislation with broad stakeholder consensus. We remain hopeful that such a consensus may be reached through this new process.

Thank you all for your commitment to the stakeholder process and the hard work it will take. I look forward to seeing your report and to continuing to work with you to ensure that the New Wisconsin Promise is kept for all children in Wisconsin, including children with disabilities.

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